

STEPHEN ONGPIN FINE ART



Belisario CORENZIO (Acaia 1558 - Naples 1646)

Three Designs for Pendentives with Allegorical Female Figures

Brush and blue wash, with touches of pen and brown ink.

Squared for transfer in black chalk.

Inscribed Bilisario a Monte Cassino at the bottom.

Rectangular sections at the central and upper portions of the left and right edges of the sheet cut out,
and the whole sheet inlaid onto the mount.

237 x 168 mm. (9 3/8 x 6 5/8 in.) at greatest dimensions.

As the old inscription at the bottom of the sheet notes, this drawing comprises preliminary studies for Corenzio's frescoes in the dome of the Benedictine abbey at Monte Cassino, painted between 1625 and 1629 but destroyed in 1944, during the Second World War. The cupola of the dome was frescoed with a scene of The Glory of Saint Benedict, while the pendentives below were occupied by female representations of the four virtues required for monastic life, namely Poverty, Chastity, Contemplation and Obedience. The main figure in the present sheet would appear to be a study for Contemplation, with an alternative design for the same figure at the lower right, while at the lower left is a study for a figure of Chastity.

This drawing was part of an album of drawings once in the possession of the 17th century collector Don Gaspar Méndez de Haro y Guzman, Marqués del Carpio y Helice (1629-1687), who served as Spanish ambassador in Rome from 1677 to 1683, and then as Viceroy of Naples from 1683 until his death. It was while he was living in Italy that Carpio assembled his large collection of drawings, arranged into some forty-three albums. The album in which the present sheet was included was, for the most part, made up of drawings by Neapolitan artists, and its contents were dispersed at auction in London in 1973. The group included a total of five drawings by Belisario Corenzio, each inscribed Bilisario in the same hand, which is thought to predate Carpio's ownership.

Provenance:

From an album of drawings, mostly by Neapolitan artists, belonging to Don Gaspar Méndez de Haro y Guzman, Marqués del Carpio, Rome and Naples
The album sold and dispersed at auction, London, Christie's, 20 March 1973, the present sheet as lot 12
Lorna Lowe, London
Purchased from her in November 1973 by Ralph Holland, Newcastle
Thence by descent until 2013.

Exhibitions

Newcastle upon Tyne, Hatton Gallery, Italian and Other Drawings 1500-1800, 1974, no.44; London, Courtauld Institute Galleries, Italian and other Drawings 1500-1800, from the Ralph Holland Collection, 1975, no.31; Newcastle, Hatton Gallery, Italian Drawings 1525-1750 from the Collection of Ralph Holland, May-June 1982, no.36.

Literature:

Viviana Farina, 'La collezione del Viceré: il Marchese del Carpio, padre Sebastiano Resta e la prima raccolta ragionata di disegni napoletani', in Francesco Solinas and Sebastian Schütze, ed., *Le Dessin Napolitain: Actes du colloque international*, Paris, Ecole Normale Supérieure, 6-8 Mars 2008, Rome, 2010, pp.190-192, fig.8 (as location unknown).

Artist description:

Of Greek origins, Belisario Corenzio is said by his biographer Bernardo de Dominici to have worked in the studio of Jacopo Tintoretto in Venice before settling in Naples, although this is unlikely. He was certainly already living in Naples at a very young age, as in 1574 he is documented as an apprentice in the workshop of another Greek painter there. Although Corenzio probably completed his studies in Rome, he is further documented in Naples between 1590 and the 1640's, and in fact seems to have worked in the city for his entire career. His earliest known works date from the early 1590's, and include major fresco cycles for the churches of Santa Maria la Nova and Sant'Andrea delle Dame. While working at the Certosa di San Martino in 1592 he came under the influence of the Roman painter Cavaliere d'Arpino, who had worked at the Certosa a few years earlier. Arpino's influence was to remain dominant on the young artist throughout the next decade, and he may indeed be said to have been Corenzio's master. By the turn of the century Corenzio had become the leading painter in Naples, painting altarpieces and fresco cycles for such major Neapolitan churches as the Gesù Nuovo, the Monte de Pietà, SS. Severino e Sossio, Santissima Annunziata, San Paolo Maggiore and many more. He also painted a series of frescoes in the Palazzo Reale, executed around 1630, and decorated the crypt of the Duomo at Salerno. Although well established as a local artist of considerable assurance and estimation, Corenzio continued to be open to the work of those painters from Rome who were briefly active in Naples, including Caravaggio and Guido Reni.

Corenzio was one of the first Neapolitan artists to leave a fairly large corpus of drawings. As a draughtsman, he developed a distinctive style, with fluid washes and a liberal use of white heightening, often working on coloured paper. De Dominici noted that 'One sees many drawings by Belisario... and truly some of his [drawings] especially of figures, are so good that they could be from the hand of Tintoretto; in imitation of whom he used to draw on tinted paper, heightened with white.' The use of blue wash in this drawing is another characteristic of Corenzio's draughtsmanship.